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Input Culture

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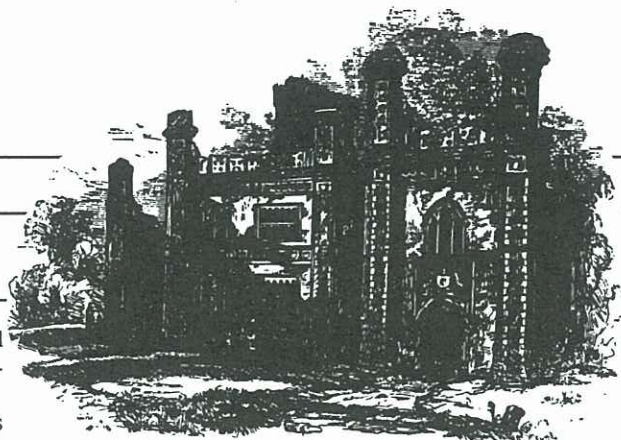
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Library Profile

Emory University General Libraries

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Just before the opening of the 1996 Olympic Games in July, we spoke with Emory University librarian **Richard Jasper** at his Atlanta office. Richard studied library science at Emory and, after a four-year stint at the University of Michigan, returned in 1989 to work in the General Libraries, where he now heads up the Acquisitions Department. Commenting cheerfully on the Olympic crowds about to descend on the city, he launched into an enthusiastic account of the General Libraries' current operations, organization, and — something of particular interest to us — the university libraries' recent transition to their new UNIX-based **EUCLID** system.

Unlike his counterparts at many institutions right now, Richard has a truly upbeat story to tell. Emory University operates with the seventh largest endowment of universities across the country, about \$1.8 billion. Emory began its rise to national prominence in the late 1970s, after Coca-Cola mogul **Robert Woodruff** gave the university \$110 million, until fairly recently the largest single gift to an institution of higher learning in the U.S. The university's strengths are in the humanities and in its professional schools, particularly health sciences, business, theology and law.

Richard said ample financial resources and strong university support of the libraries have made for healthy materials budgets. In spite of the rising cost of serials, for instance, budgetary considerations have not yet forced a serials cut. The materials budget has kept up with inflation, allowing the libraries at Emory to undertake "the additions to collections that other well-endowed universities were making twenty years ago."

Emory is home to five libraries: the General Libraries (which include the Robert W. Woodruff Library, the Learning Resources Center of the Candler Library, and the J. Samuel Guy Chemistry Library) and four libraries closely associated with particular schools at Emory — the Pitts Theology Library, the McMillan Law Library, the Hoke O. Kelly Library of Oxford College, and the Woodruff Health Sciences Center Library. Holdings throughout the system number 2.1 million volumes, and 1.2 million of these are housed in the General Libraries.

The two primary administrative divisions at the General Libraries are Public Services and Collections and Technical Services, the latter comprising the Cataloging, Catalog Support, Collections Management, Serials, and Accounting Departments. The current structure resulted in 1995, when Serials and Ac-

counting were separated from the acquisitions function.

The General Libraries acquire about 30,000 new titles a year, not including the approximately 8,000 active serial titles. About 20 subject selectors, whose primary assignments are for the most part in the Reference and Catalog departments, work with area coordinators in the Collection Management Department to determine which materials should be purchased. Order requests are then referred to the Acquisitions Department, where nine staff members seek out possible duplication, determine the best sources, order, and create a temporary bibliographic record for each title. When the title arrives, acquisitions receives it online, then forwards the item to the catalog department.

Until 1994, this work was accomplished through DOBIS, an IBM developed mainframe library management system contemporaneous with NOTIS. Implemented in 1986 with financial help from the Pew Charitable Trust, DOBIS had what Richard called "some nice features" — public access to the catalog, online capability, and PC access for department heads. But Richard reported that its technical processing was "devilishly uncomfortable and pretty rigid on the acquisitions end." Also, like other mainframe systems, it was expensive to maintain, about \$1 million a year. Eventually, the inflexibilities in DOBIS's technical processing and a desire to provide better interfaces with reference databases prompted the university libraries to look into Unix-based "server" systems that offered greater flexibility and would be easier to maintain.

The committee charged with selection spent two years shopping for a new system, and eventually settled on the **SIRSI Unicorn System**. SIRSI is headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama, but it has strong Atlanta ties, having originated in systems work done at the **Georgia Institute of Technology** library across town. The power and flexibility of the system were attractive to the committee, and the libraries' ability to share control of the system with its vendors was especially appealing. EUCLID, as the system was dubbed, is the combination of the SIRSI Unicorn software and Emory's bibliographic database containing more than 1 million records.

Implementation of EUCLID throughout all five university libraries began in the summer of 1994. The SIRSI Migration Steering Committee (SMSC) made the initial implementa-

tion decisions. As more input was needed regarding hands on functions, SMSC spun off a string of libraries-wide working groups with droll acronyms, e.g., the Catalog Working Group (CATWG OR "CATWIG"), the Serials/Acquisitions Working Group (SAWG), the EUCLID Reports Working Group (ERWG OR "EARWIG"), and, within the General Libraries itself, a SIRSI Training and Implementation Group (STIG) to coordinate discussion of implementation and training issues across departmental and divisional lines.

For the General Libraries, full-blown implementation of the serials control module was delayed to late 1994 and early 1995. In addition to bringing up the serials control module, the General Libraries also had to contend with changing serials vendors and migrating all of its serials data from Faxon's SC-10 system. "An intense experience," Richard commented, crediting serials librarian **Lola Halpin** for her management of that process.

The SIRSI implementation was a good learning experience for the Emory Libraries, according to Richard. "This was not just a technological feat but an organizational feat. We learned a few lessons about ourselves," He noted. "We found that we sometimes had a hard time making decisions and that we needed to do a better job of involving people directly affected by those decisions," he said. "In implementing EUCLID, we came up with structures and mechanisms that improved our ability to make decisions and to involve a wide variety of staff and users in the process."

An important item on the libraries' agenda is the issue of responsiveness to rapid technological change, and Richard said the implementation process had impressed on many people in the libraries the need to continue evaluating the capacity to respond to environmental changes. At the same time, he said, there is a growing awareness across the Emory campus of the many new electronic tools that could serve the entire university community. University Provost **Billy Frye**, for example, has established an annual superfund of a half million dollars for digital resources. This kind of financial and university support, Richard said, make him confident that the libraries will respond effectively to technological change. "We've been extraordinarily fortunate," Richard concluded. 